

often are silenced: the gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students who face verbal, nonverbal, and physical harassment in our schools.

Today is the National Day of Silence across this country. Students have taken a vow of silence to protest the discrimination and intolerance that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students face on a daily basis.

In my district I am especially proud of Safe Schools Project of Santa Cruz County, which is coordinated by Santa Cruz County High School senior Nikira Hernandez. This program focuses on making K-through-12 schools in Santa Cruz County a safe place for all youth regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Considering our country's commitment to equality and liberty, it is disturbing that anyone is subjected to harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. We must work to protect our youth from violence and hatred while fostering a positive academic environment free of derogatory statements, taunts, and slurs.

For that reason I am proud to co-sponsor H. Con. Res. 86, which memorializes the National Day of Silence.

#### TAX RELIEF

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, last week millions of Americans got a surprise when they filed their tax returns. This year a record 44 million tax returns, one-third of all returns filed, have no income tax liability because of the available credits and deductions in the Tax Code. This is a 50 percent increase in the number of zero-tax filers in just 4 years. The vast majority of these 44 million filers are from low-income households who saw their tax liability disappear thanks to the tax cuts pushed by President Bush and this House.

The expansion of the 10 percent bracket, the increased child tax credit, and the marriage penalty relief are the leading reasons that so many people were able to have zero liability. All these tax provisions are in jeopardy if Congress does not act to extend them by the end of this year.

These are not tax cuts for the rich. They are tax provisions designed to help working men and women bring home more of their paychecks. In fact, 75 percent of the 44 million will earn less than \$20,000 per year, and 97 percent will earn less than \$40,000 per year.

Congress needs to extend these provisions and continue giving tax relief to working America.

#### THE GREAT LAKES

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes are the largest body of freshwater in North America. They contain literally 20 percent of the entire world's freshwater. Twenty-eight million Americans get their daily drinking water from Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes, and yet we treat it as just an overgrown pond. Today it is being polluted with invasive species, urban runoff, and mercury hot spots.

We have a bipartisan bill endorsed by every Governor, every Senator from the Great Lakes, and 108 Members out of 125 from the Great Lakes region to clean up the Great Lakes, dedicate \$4 billion over 5 years, just like we are investing in Iraq's water and sewage system, here in the United States to preserve the largest body of freshwater in all of North America.

This issue is not an issue of left versus right. It is an issue of right versus wrong. And it is time to make our investments in our future and our environmental quality and water quality in what is truly a great national heritage, our Great Lakes.

#### SENATOR KERRY'S ECONOMIC PLAN WOULD HARM OUR ECONOMY

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, the Democrat candidate for President has promised to create 10 million jobs if elected, but a recent economic analysis of his plan by the Heritage Foundation says he is wrong and showed four negative effects of his scheme. First, employment growth slows under his plan with 225,000 fewer jobs created per year under his policy, in contrast to the fact that in the first quarter of this year, 513,000 new jobs have been created.

Secondly, GDP growth slows for the next decade, underperforming by \$20 billion in just the first 5 years.

Third, after-tax income shrinks. And this makes sense. Taxes go up, take-home pay goes down. And under the Democrat plan, take-home pay plummets \$240 billion below current projections.

And, lastly, savings plummet. The personal savings rate would average 17 percent less during just the first year of his administration.

Each of these items would reverse trends started by President Bush's economic recovery program, a plan that is working.

In the end his tax-and-spend, rob-the-rich-to-pay-the-government economic scheme will do more harm than good.

#### URGING APOLOGY FROM THE PRESIDENT

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I do not think anything can negate the fact that this President has lost more jobs, 3 million jobs, than any President in our history.

But, Mr. Speaker, I stand today to offer a word of condolence, but also to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in Iraq, the men and women of the United States military, innocent citizens, and to challenge the President, as the 9/11 Commission families have challenged him, to apologize to the American people for misdirecting men and women of the military, now reservists and National Guard, young men and women, into a war that one wonders whether it matters, into a war where there was not the kind of equipment that those soldiers needed, reinforced Humvees and other equipment, flak jackets that they needed.

I am here to apologize and ask the President that he provide the necessary resources for these troops so that lives will not continue to be lost, so that mothers and fathers, wives and relatives will not have to continue to mourn. It is a tragedy the policy that we have seen in this United States, a policy of reckless direction of men and women in war, bloodshed unnecessary.

Mr. President and the administration, Mr. Vice President, we need a plan, and you need to offer it to the American people now.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind the Members to address their remarks to the Chair and not to the President.

#### IN PRAISE OF "NATURALAWN," A BUSINESS IN FREDERICK, MARYLAND

(Mr. BARTLETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, this Earth Day I want to recognize a company from my district that is making a product people want and is beneficial for the environment.

NaturaLawn is a business located in downtown Frederick, Maryland. Starting small in 1987, they have grown to become the fourth largest lawn care service provider in the United States, generating in excess of \$24 million.

NaturaLawn identified a product that would have popular appeal, an organic-based fertilization program that uses naturally based ingredients as opposed to traditional chemical fertilizers. This product is environmentally friendly and provides a desired product. The company has created many franchises across the Nation.

All of these great things were done privately in our free enterprise system of Congress. No governmental regulations or mandates caused this business